

THE
OCTAVIUS
OF

Minutius Felix:

THAT
Excellent Monument of Chri-
stianity, and *Roman* Eloquence:

CONTAINING

A DEFENCE of the *Christians*
against the Calumnies and Obje-
ctions of the Ancient Heathens:

IN

A CONFERENCE between
Cecilius a Heathen Orator, and
Octavius a Christian Convert.

English'd by

EDWARD COMBE, Rector of
S. Martins in the City of *Worcester*.

L O N D O N:

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Church-yard. 1703.

Minutius
Felix

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115.

REVERENDO ADMODUM
IN CHRISTO PATRI
AC PRESULI

Gulielmo Talbot,
OCTAVIUM MINUTII

IN ATHEISMUM & IDOLOLATRIAM

Ethnicam

Anglico tandem idiomate

Perorantem ;

Cum omni debito Cultu

& summâ Observantiâ,

Offert

EDVARDUS COMBE.

REV. JAMES H. HARRIS
IN CHRISTIANITY
A. D. 1850

CHRISTIANITY
A. D. 1850

CHRISTIANITY
A. D. 1850

CHRISTIANITY
A. D. 1850

CHRISTIANITY
A. D. 1850

TO
PHILANDER.

MY DEAR PHILANDER,
I find then, no difficulty nor
Objection the nature of the thing or my
incapacity could suggest, would ever
have prevailed against thy desire of see-
ing an English Version of TER-
TULLIAN's APOLOGETIC, and
the OCTAVIUS of MINUTIUS
FELIX: The latter being the greatest
Master-piece of the Eloquence of the
Fathers; and both one and the other
the most valuable Monuments of Chri-
stianity,

To Philander.

stianity, as thou saist, next to the holy Pages.

Could I have presumed an Attempt of this sort would have met with as kind reception from other Hands, as from PHILANDER himself; he should not have felt the Disappointment such pressing and repeated Importunities, nor 1 the Pain of returning as many unanswerable, tho' in the event ineffectual, Excuses. By priority of time TERTULLIAN has the Right of Precedency; but thy Reasons must prevail, and the Carthaginian gives place to the Roman; of whom St. Jerom has left us this Account. MINUTIUS, says he, a great Roman Orator, wrote a Dialogue, call'd OCTAVIUS, where he brings in a Christian and a Heathen disputing about Religion. There is another

To Philander.

nother goes under his Name OF
FATE, or AGAINST A-
STROLOGERS; but this tho'
written by a Person of Elocution, is
different in my Opinion from the
Style of the first. Such a Character
from so great a Man, not to be sus-
pected of Flattery, to be praised for so
rare a quality as that of Eloquence by
one that was most Eloquent; to be
treated as a great Orator by the grea-
test Orator of his Age, is a Glory few
Persons have receiv'd, and fewer have
deserv'd: Yet MINUTIUS FELIX
had both one and the other. But set-
ting aside these glorious Testimonies, the
agreeable Descriptions he makes in the
very Entrance of his Work, to charm
his Reader, and open his mind for the
reception of what is to follow, the no
less Vigour and Industry with which he
main-

To Philander.

maintains the Dispute when he is in the Lists, the sweetness of his Style, with those noble and hardy Figures, and that subtle and lively way of Reasoning, sufficiently discover he was Eloquent. But above all his Art of pleasing and persuading at the same time, ranks him with the most Celebrated Orators, and in the Secret of never tiring his Reader he exceeds the most Illustrious.

I shall not here enter into any Discourse about the Subject of this Book, St. Jerom has said enough to recommend it to our perusal, and there's nothing, thou know'st, more tedious than a long Argument and a long Preface. Neither have we any farther account of MINUTIUS: he was an eminent Lawyer; as LACTANTIUS tells us in that remarkable Encomium he gives of him. OCTAVIUS and CECILIUS we
are

To Philander.

are greater Strangers to; the Employment objected to the former was perhaps an innocent piece of Rallery. The latter is suppos'd to be that CECILIUS from whom St. CIPRIAN took his Surname.

After an honourable mention of the learned Lawyer BALDWINUS, who retriev'd, and asserted this Work to its genuine Author; and due acknowledgments to RIGALTUS, and the Sieur D' Ablancourt, I shall say nothing of faults that thro' the negligence of Copyists have crept into this excellent Piece, which is now of near a thousand five hundred Years standing, the number of them might fill a Volume; we may discover the Sense in most if not all the Editions, and that's enough for our purpose; for to think of rendring every word in a work of Eloquence is

To Philander.

to attempt a thing impossible. I have been careful to keep to his intention as far as I could discern it, and to make him say nothing unworthy of himself; especially in any place of Importance. For 'tis a Jewish Superstition to adhere to the Letter, and lose the Sense, to pursue the Words, and forego the Design for which they are employed. Moreover, we render an Author but by halves, if we retrench his Eloquence. As he was agreeable in the Graces of his own Language of which we deprive him, we ought to give him those of ours. otherwise we shall draw but a wretched Copy from an admirable Original; and after we have done all, we can find nothing in our hands but a lifeless Carcass, from whence all the Colours are flown. Such must be the consequence of a literal Version, the
Beauties

To Philander.

Beauties and Graces as well as Proprieties of all Languages being so very different. And I am apt to believe two Works are more alike when both are Eloquent, than when one is Eloquent and the other not. Hereby I would not be thought to say, this is Eloquent, but only that I have endeavoured to keep my Eye upon the strength of his Reason, and the Beauty of his Discourse, without doing any wilful Violence to the Sense, an unpardonable Liberty, and destructive of the very end of Translation.

But such as it is, PHILANDER, it was undertaken at thy Request, and is wholly at thy disposal; if thou wilt make a Present of it to the publick, may all the Advantage that redounds from thence accrue to thee. But remember, that in rendring thee what is
thy

To Philander.

thy Due ; I charge thee at the same
time with all my Faults. Tho' I
committed them, I did not publish 'em,
and a hidden Sin, thou knowest is half
paraoned ; But he who gives the Scan-
dal deserves the greater blame. To
punish thee I will not insert thy Pane-
gyrick here, as the Custom is. Thy
Praises are in the Mouths of all that
have the Honour to be acquainted with
thee : And to what purpose should they
know the Virtues of PHILANDER,
who know not who PHILANDER
is ?

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THE
OCTAVIUS
OF
Minutius Felix.

WHEN I think of my
Dear *Octavius*, and
recollect the agreeable
Moments we have pass'd
together ; it gives me so much Pleasure,
I may be said to be still in the Enjoy-
ment of those happy Times ; so lively
an Impression his Image has made on
my Heart, since my Eyes have lost
him. And certainly 'tis not without
reason that this excellent Person has
left us under so great a Regret for his
B Loss,

Loss, seeing he ever lov'd us with such a singular Constancy and sincere Affection, that on all occasions, both in our Pastime, and in our more serious Affairs, my Will was his ; our Desires and Aversions the same, as if we had both had but one Heart and one Soul. He was formerly likewise the Confident of my Youth, and the Companion of my Errors, and when those Clouds were dispers'd, and I emerg'd out of the Darkeness of Ignorance into the Light of Truth, he was pleas'd to be my Guide, and had the Glory of preventing me in so holy an Enterprize. As I lately thought then of all these things, I was most affected with that grave and important Discourse he had with CECILIUS in my presence, when he reclaim'd him from his vain Superstitions to the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST.

OCTAVIUS was come to *Rome*, rather to see me, than on any Affair of his own, and did not fear for my sake to leave his Family, and his Children as yet in their tender years, in which they are most amiable, when they begin to pronounce

of MINUTIUS FELIX. 3

nounce their Words by halves, and the defect of their Tongue gives so much grace to all that they say. I leave it to be imagin'd what a surprizing Joy I was under, on the arrival of a Happiness so little expected. But after our first Transports, and some Days were expir'd, when we had given each other a Recital of the several Adventures that had befallen us in our Absence: We consented to go to *Ostia*, knowing the Sea-Baths would be serviceable to my Health, and I was at leisure during the Vacation: For it was after the great Heats of Summer were past, when the Fruits grew ripe, and preparations were making for the Vintage.

Being come to this agreeable City, we went early in the Morning to take a turn on the Sea-Beach, where we have not only the advantage of the fresh Air to enliven our Spirits, and invigorate our Bodies, but of the Sand likewise, which by a gentle yielding to the impression of our Feet gives all the Pleasure of walking without the Fatigue.

At this time CECILIUS who was of our Company, seeing an Idol of SERAPIS made an obeysance, and saluted it in passing, as the Superstitious are accustomed to do. Then OCTAVIUS addressing himself to me, Brother, said he, thou art to blame to suffer a Man who is never out of thy Company, to continue under so great a blindness, as to run his Head against these Stones at noon-day, which have indeed some Figure, and are perfumed and crown'd; but are Stones notwithstanding: 'Tis as much to thy dishonour as to his, to let him remain in this Error.

We had in the mean time measured more than half the Town, and were entering upon the open Strand. The Waters by gently beating on the Shore, had very commodiously rais'd and extended the Sand, as if they had consulted and design'd the convenience of the Walk: And altho' the Winds were appeased, and the great Billows did not swell and foam, the Sea, as never being in a settled tranquillity, roll'd about in a restless and reciprocal motion. Mean time
we

we were pleased with walking by the Coast, and to see the Waves come curling along to salute our Feet, and then break, and reënter into the vast Continent of Water. Thus agreeably we continu'd our little journey without diverting from the Shoar that bends so sweetly in this place.

OCTAVIUS entertain'd us with so much pleasure in a Discourse of Navigation, we were neither tired with walking nor attending to him. 'Tis true that we might not exceed our limits. we made returns the same way we came. Being arrived at the Place where they draw up the Vessels on dry Land, we saw some little Boys engaged in an Exercise they pursued with great Emulation. The Sport they were so intent upon is this, they gather each of them a Magazine of small Shells, and out of these the flattest and roundest they can find, and stooping down fling them with all their strength, so as to make them glance, leap, or just graze, on the surface of the Water; and he that flings his Shell farthest, and makes the most bounds, is Victorious.

As we were pleased, OCTAVIUS and I, to see the pastime of the Children, CÆCILIUS neither amusing himself with this Diverſion, nor ſo much as ſmiling at the Heat and Contention of the little Youths, remained penſive, and Melancholick, and plainly diſcovered he had ſomewhat in his thoughts that made him uneaſie.

‘ What now, ſaid I, what’s become
‘ of that natural gaiety, and humour
‘ ſo charming, that could never be hid
‘ on the moſt ſolemn occaſions?

‘ Not to diſſemble with you, ſaid
‘ he, OCTAVIUS has toucht me.
‘ It may well be ſuppoſed he did not
‘ reprimand you, but to affront me;
‘ that he did not accuſe you of Negli-
‘ gence but to make me paſs as ſtupid
‘ and ignorant. I reſolutely demand
‘ Satisfaction for the Abufe, and that
‘ we may fairly argue it out; he’ll find
‘ it perhaps an eaſier matter to diſcourſe
‘ theſe Points among thoſe of his own
‘ party, than in a regular Conference
‘ with Men of Learning. Let us but
‘ repair to thoſe Stones that advance

‘ into the Sea, and are placed there to
‘ defend the Baths against the violence
‘ of the Waves, that we may repose
‘ our selves, and dispute at our ease.

Accordingly we went, and they placed me the middle, not to do me any particular honour; for Friendship either finds or makes us all equal; but that as an Arbitrator of the difference, I might the better hear the Arguments of one side and the other, and separate the two Combatants.

Then *Cecilius* began thus, ‘ Brother,
‘ altho’ thou art satisfied as to the merit
‘ of the intended Controversie, since
‘ thou hast relinquish’d the Service of
‘ our Gods to embrace Christianity;
‘ nevertheless at present thou must hold
‘ the Ballance of an equal Judge, that the
‘ Sentence thou shalt pronounce may
‘ rather appear to be the necessary conclusion of our Reasons, than the result of thy own Sentiments. If thou canst govern thy self then as a perfect Stranger that has no Interest in this Affair, it will not be difficult to convince thee, that all things in the World are doubt-

ful and uncertain, and the knowledge we have of them rather Opinion than Science. And therefore I do the less admire that so many should embrace; and inconsiderately acquiesce in the first Opinion that presents it self, without giving themselves the trouble of examining matters to the bottom. But 'tis a most deplorable thing, and what I cannot reflect upon without indignation, to see a sort of Ignorants who have not the least knowledge of Letters, nor of the most vulgar Arts; so peremptory and positive in the decision of the most difficult and important Questions in Nature: which have exercised and perplexed the Philosophers of all Ages, without being able to attain to any certain and satisfactory Resolutions. The Mind of Man is so little capable of such sublime knowledge, that we are in the dark as to things that lie at our Feet: And it is an impious and unwarrantable Curiosity to be inquisitive into the Mysteries of Providence, to pry into the Archives of Heaven, or Secrets
lockt

lockt up in the bowels of the Earth:
Happy according to the ancient
Oracle of Wisdom, if we could but
know our selves.

But if we are unable to reclaim
our thoughts from such extravagant
and unprofitable Researches, and
keep them within the Discipline
of Reason, and the Restraints of their
narrow Capacity: If creeping on the
Earth as we do, we must penetrate
the Heavens, and soar above the
Stars: at least let us not add a second
Error to the first, by filling the World
with vain Opinions and Phantoms to
fright Men. For whether all things
originally consist of certain seminal
Principles naturally combined, or
whether the Members of all this great
Universe were form'd and adjusted by
Chance, why should we make a God
the Creator of the World? Let it be the
Fire that kindled the Stars, let the
matter that constitutes the Heavens
it self sustain, let the Earth be poi-
sed and establish'd by its own Weight,
and the Sea be a collection of Waters
press'd out of that heavy Mass? Why
this

‘ this Religion ? Why these Fears ?
‘ What is this unaccountable Supersti-
‘ tion ? What is Man and all other Ani-
‘ mals in the World but a Mixture and
‘ Coalition of Elements, which sepa-
‘ rate again, and return to their primi-
‘ tive state of Being, and all this with-
‘ out the concurrence or interposition
‘ of any pretended Moderator or Di-
‘ rector. Thus by a perpetual conflu-
‘ ence of the materials of celestial Fires
‘ we see a Sun perpetually shine : Thus
‘ the Vapors and Exhalations of the
‘ Earth successively form Clouds, which
‘ afterwards condense, by degrees rise
‘ aloft, and then dissolve into Rain,
‘ cause the Winds to blow, the Hail to
‘ rattle, or fill the Heavens with a rum-
‘ bling noise, make the Lightning flash,
‘ and dart the Thunder-bolt : Which
‘ therefore falls as indifferently, some-
‘ times on a Mountain, sometimes on a
‘ Tree, one while on Temples, ano-
‘ ther while on Palaces, now on those
‘ that Pray, anon on those that Blas-
‘ pheme. What think ye of Tempests
‘ various and uncertain, whereby all
things

‘ things in the World are confounded
‘ and overthrown, without distinction
‘ or choice ; to see the good and the
‘ bad involv’d in the same Ship-wreck,
‘ without any regard to Virtue or
‘ Vice, the Guilty and the Innocent
‘ consumed together in the same Con-
‘ flagration, and all People indiscrimi-
‘ nately perish in Pestilence, and in War,
‘ the best to be generally taken off first.
‘ And in times of Peace too Villany is
‘ not only ranked with Innocence ,
‘ it is ador’d : So that considering the
‘ success and prosperity of the Flagitious,
‘ you know not whether you ought to
‘ detest their Crimes, or covet their Hap-
‘ piness. If a Providence or the pow-
‘ erful Arm of a God interpos’d in the
‘ Government of the World, surely nei-
‘ ther PHALARIS nor DIONISIUS
‘ the *Tyrant* would ever have been
‘ Kings ; RUTILIUS and CAMILUS
‘ would never have been banished ; SO-
‘ CRATES would never have been
‘ condemned to the Hemlock. You see
‘ the Trees now sinking under the
‘ weight of their own Fruit, the Harvest
‘ and Vintage in a most promising and
‘ hopeful

‘ hopeful prospect, all in an instant de-
‘ stroyed and consumed by Storm and
‘ Rain. Certainly either the Intrigues
‘ and Springs of Providence are very in-
‘ tricate and obscure, or what’s more
‘ probable, all things are conducted by
‘ Chance, without Rule or Design.
‘ Therefore since the Motions of Na-
‘ ture are casual and contingent, and all
‘ Men subjected to the Dominion of
‘ Fortune, is it not far more rational and
‘ just, to retain the Discipline of our
‘ Ancestors, and adhere to the Gods
‘ our Fathers adored, and the Princip-
‘ les of Religion which were instill’d
‘ with our Milk, than rashly presume
‘ to judge and determine upon things
‘ so sublime? Had we not better con-
‘ fide in the first Men, who coming in
‘ Ages more incorrupt, and as it were in
‘ the Infancy of the World, more espe-
‘ cially deserv’d the Favour of the Gods,
‘ and to live by their immediate Dire-
‘ ction and conduct? Accordingly we
‘ find all Cities, Provinces and Empires
‘ whatever, have received from their
‘ Ancestors, Religions and Ceremonies
‘ pe.

peculiar to themselves, and worship
 the topical Gods of their respective
 Countrys. As the *Eleusinians*, CERES;
 the *Phrygians*, CYBELE; the *Epidaurians*,
 ÆSCULAPIUS; the *Chaldeans*,
 BELL; the *Syrians* ASTARTE; the
Sythians DIANA; the *Gauls* MER-
 CUUY the *Romans* ALL; by which
 means their power arriv'd to its present
 height, whereby they render'd them-
 selves Masters of the World, and car-
 ried their Empire beyond the Confines
 of the Ocean, and the influence of
 the Sun. In the exercise of a Reli-
 gious Valour; by crowding the City
 with the Service of the Gods, chaste
Vestals, and so great a number of
 Priests and Ceremonies: By adoring
 their incensed Gods, even when *Rome*
 was sacked, and nothing left them but
 the Capitol, a time when others would
 have becht Blasphemies against them;
 by being in earnest when to celebrate
 their Mysteries they marched with-
 out Arms thro' the midst of their Ene-
 mies, astonish'd at the hardiness of
 their Zeal: By adoring their van-
 quished

quished Gods, at the very instant when the Enemy had taken their City, and began to make them sensible of the Insolence of Victory: By searching for Divinities throughout the whole Earth, to honour and present them with Temples at *Rome*; by erecting Altars to *Manes* and Divinities unknown; in a Word, by adoring the Gods of all Nations, they made themselves Masters of all Nations.

This Devotion was always upheld and promoted among them, and even improv'd by succession of Time. For Antiquity creates a strange respect for Temples and Things Sacred. The more obscure and uncertain they are in their Origine, the more they are revered. It was not then without Reason, I confess, tho' I may be mistaken, that our Fathers were so much addicted to Auguries, and to consult the Entrails of Beasts; so zealous and early in the Institution of the service of the Gods, and the Consecration of the Temples. Search the Books that preserve the Memory of things, you'll find all these
Cere-

‘ Céremonies and Myſteries of Religi-
‘ on introduced, either as grateful Me-
‘ morials and Acknowledgments of the
‘ Divine Bounty, or to avert the immi-
‘ nent effects of his Diſpleaſure: Wit-
‘ neſs the *Mother* of the *Gods*, who vin-
‘ dicated at her appearing the Honour
‘ of a Lady, and delivered *Rome* from
‘ the fear of her Enemies. Witneſs the
‘ Equeſtrian Statues of the two Bro-
‘ thers erected in the very place they
‘ ſhewed themſelves, when, return’d
‘ from the defeat of *Perſes*, with their
‘ Horſes yet foaming and breathleſs,
‘ they gave intelligence of it the ſame
‘ Day it was obtained : Witneſs the
‘ *Decii* who gained a Victory by devo-
‘ ting themſelves for the good of their
‘ Country. And witneſs him likewiſe,
‘ who threw himſelf into the Gulph
‘ that opened in the miſt of *Rome*, and
‘ cloſed the Abyſs by the Honour he
‘ did the Gods who ſo ordained. And
‘ indeed the contempt of the Sooth-ſay-
‘ ers has made us ſenſible of the pre-
‘ ſence of the Gods oftener than we de-
‘ ſired *Allia* that fatal name is ſuffici-
‘ ent

ent to attest it, and the Engagement
of *Claudius* and *Junius* with the *Car-*
thaginians, a miserable Ship-wreck
rather than a Barrel. *Thrasimene* saw
her Waters died and flooded with
Roman Blood, occasion'd by an Af-
front put upon the *Augurs* by a Con-
sul. The *Parthians* plundered us for
just Impeccations slighted and deser-
ved. As to matters more remote,
touching the Nativity of the Gods,
and their Benefactions to Men, I shall
be silent. I pass by likewise the Ver-
ses of Poets, and the Oracles that
have predicted the Destiny of things,
being apprehensive least Antiquity
should appear to ye to be too fabulous.
Look upon those Temples the Ram-
parts of the Empire, and the Ornament
of *Rome*. Are they not more venerable
and famous on the account of the Gods
that reside and are adored in them;
then for the Richness of the Offerings
and the pompous Magnificence with
which they are adorned? There the
Priests are inspired with the fore-
knowledg of future events, from
thence

thence they bring those *Oracles* against our Dangers, and Remedies for our Diseases. From thence they derive Hope for the Distressed, Redress for the Miserable Consolation for the Unfortunate, and the Ease of our Pains. We see and acknowledge those Gods during our Repose in the Night, that we blaspheme and renounce in the Day. Therefore since by general consent all Men are disposed to believe there are Gods, altho' their Nature and Origine be unknown, shall we tolerate the Insolence of conceited pretenders to impious Wisdom, who make it their Business to extirpate a Belief, so wholesom, so ancient, so beneficial, to Mankind? Whether they be that *Theodore* the *Cyrenian*, or that other by Antiquity surnamed the *Atheist*, who would have destroyed this Principle in order to cashier all Religion and Restraint, and to undermine the most solid Foundation of humane Society and Civil Life: They never had the esteem and reputation of Sages with all their false Wisdom and Lectures of Impiety, If the *Athenians* expell'd a *Protagoras*.

C

out

out of their Country, who disputed the Divinity, as a Philosopher, rather problematically than profanely, and burned his Writings before a numerous Assembly: Shall we suffer (to express my self with a little more resentment in the heat of dispute) Shall we suffer, I say, Men of an infamous and desperate Faction, to attack the Gods without Punishment, and draw together an ignorant Rabble, chiefly of Women, easie to be imposed on thro' the weakness and credulity of their Sex, to initiate them in a profane Society, not to say Conspiracy; where no sacred Ceremony is observed; Nothing but Sacrilege, midnight Assemblies, Solemn Fastings, and horrid Repasts: A Crew that affect Darkness, and shun the Light, who are silent in publick, and speak incessantly when they are by themselves. Who fly from Temples as from Charnel-houses, condemn the Gods, deride things Sacred; and in short, pity others, who are miserable themselves. Who neither regard our Dignities, nor the Honors annext to the Priesthood, but spurn

spurn at our Purple, being themselves in Rags; and by as strange Folly as incredible Audacity, despise present torments upon an apprehension of Evils uncertain and future, and are fearless of dying to prevent dying when they shall be no more. Such prevalence has Bigottry, and the delusive hopes they fool themselves with. In the meantime as ill Weeds are most apt to propagate, and infectious Vices to spread and get ground, this accursed Sect augments likewise daily; for which Reason we ought in time to use our utmost to exterminate and abolish the execrable Faction. They know one another by hidden signs, and love as by instinct even before they are known. Luxury and Incontinence are essentials of their Religion; they call one another Brother and Sister, that by virtue of Names so sacred they may improve Fornication into Incest; such a Pleasure do the Wretches take in refining upon Villany. And doubtless if there were no truth in all this, the Flame would not be so flagrant and universal. 'Tis said likewise

that by an unheard of Superstition they worship the Head of an Ass, they have consecrated; a Religion like themselves, and worthy of their Life. They pay a religious Devoir, as some say, to a certain part of their Priests. I am not positive whether these Suspensions are true or false, but without doubt such Ceremonies, and nocturnal Devotions, are all very proper to give occasion for such Reports. And he that says they Worship a Man that was hang'd for his Crimes, and that the Wood of a Cross is a part of their Ceremonies, attributes Altars to them worthy of their Villany, and makes them worship what they deserve. Furthermore the Ceremony they use at the admission of any one to partake of their Mysteries is as horrid, as notorious. They place before this new-comer an Infant covered with Paste, to conceal from him the Murther he is to commit, herein he is commanded to thrust a Knife in several Places; the Blood that runs about they greedily lick up, and the common Guilt is the common Pledge and Ingagement of their Secrecy

Secrecy and Silence. Myſteries worſe than all Sacrileges. Neither are we ignorant of what ſort their Feaſts are; our Orator *Cirtenſis* mentions them in his Harangue: On a ſolemn day they all aſſemble, Men, Women, Children, Brothers, Siſters, of every Age and Sex, after they have eaten and drunk plentifully, when the Wine and the Meat begin to provoke and inflame their Luſt, they fling ſomewhat to a Dog that he cannot reach, but by overthrowing and extinguishing the Lights, to which he is tied for that purpoſe. Being thus rid of the only Witneſs of their Crimes; they promiſcuouſly lie together, equally guilty of the ſame Inceſt in their Heart and Intention which poſſibly all cannot be in Effect, forasmuch as the Sin that every one commits is the Deſign and Deſire of the whole Gang. I purpoſely omit many other things that are charged upon them; you have heard too much. And certainly the darkneſs their Myſteries require, is a ſufficient proof of all, at leaſt of the greateſt part of what has been alledged. For why

are they so solicitous to hide their Devotion? Men fear not the discovery of what they know to be warrantable and honest, but Crimes require Secrecy and Silence. Why have they no Altars, no Temples nor Images at least that appear? Why do they not speak but in private, nor assemble but by stealth; If what they thus hide, and what they thus worship, be neither infamous nor criminal? Again, Who is this unknown, solitary forlorn God, that no free Nation ever ador'd, no not the *Romans*, who worship the Gods of the whole Earth? Of all Mankind, none but the Rascally and Wretched Nation of the *Jews*, was ever observed to adore but one God; but then it was done openly with Temples and Altars, with Ceremonies and Sacrifices. Altho' the power of that God is so insignificant, that at this present he is a Captive of the *Romans*, and his Worshipers with him. But what Monsters, what Prodigies do these People not invent? That this God of theirs they can neither see themselves, nor discover to others, is intimately acquainted

ed in the Lives and Actions of all Men, hears their Voices, and penetrates into their inmost thoughts, and is every where present. They make him troublesome, impertinent, and even impudent in his great Curiosity, in consequence of which he must have a hand in all that we do, run to and fro, and leave nothing unturned. But how can he take care of every thing, being employed in so many Places, or suffice for all, who is taken up and detained in every part? but this is not all; they threaten the World, the Heavens not excepted, with a general Conflagration: You'd say they conspir'd and design'd its Ruin. As if any thing could subvert this regular eternal Order established by the Powers of Nature, or that the Elements would break their Alliance, and fall to Confusion; and this Divine Harmony dissolve itself to destroy the Machine that contains and surrounds it. To which they add as many idle Dreams and old Wives Tales: That they shall rise again after Death with their Dust and Ashes: And persist in the Belief

of their own Inventions with such wonderful Confidence, and invincible Obstinacy, you would take them to have been dead, and risen again. A double wickedness, and double folly; to believe the destruction of the Heavens and the Stars which we daily leave in the same state we found them, and not believe that of Men, who die every hour, and come to an end as certainly as they had a beginning. Notwithstanding they refuse to burn the Dead, and condemn our usage. As if the Corps that are denied the Flames, would not be reduced to Ashes in time and a course of years. Do you think it is of any account whether we are dissolv'd in the Earth, or the Sea, whether we are devoured by Flames, or the Beasts of the Field? If Corps retain any Sense after Death, any kind of Sepulture must be a Torment to them; if they have none, that whereby they are most effectually and expeditiously consumed is the best. In the mean time prepossessed with this ridiculous Opinion, they promise themselves as righteous and holy Persons,

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an eternal Felicity after this Life, and consign all others as sinful and wicked, to endless misery. I have enough to say to this, but need not be at any further trouble to prove them to be worse than others, having anticipated that already, but granting them to be more just, is not Destiny, as is generally believed, the constant cause of all the Good and Evil in the World; which is their Opinion too, with this difference only, that as some ascribe all our Actions to Destiny, they attribute the same to God; accordingly they say it was not any Act or Impulse of their own Will that disposed them to embrace their Sect, but they were elected and called thereto by God, wherein they make a God unjust; who does not punish the Fault so much as the Misfortune of Men. But answer me a little, I beseech thee; Shall you rise again without a Body, or with one and the same you now have, or with another? Shall it be without a Body? I can't conceive how there can be either Life or Soul, or Sensation without a Body. How then? With a Body? It is long
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since that has ceased to be. If with another, that cannot be the same Man. But since the expiration of so many Years, the revolution of so many Ages, there is not so much as one single instance to be found, of any Man that has returned from the Dead, as the Poets feign of *Prothesilaus*, for a few hours only, to afford us the least umbrage for assenting to such an incredible thing. All this is nothing but Whim, Chimeras of a distemper'd and delirious Brain and vain Consolations of Poetick Invention agreeably represented, and plausibly set off, which you being credulous and easily imposed on, have revived in favour of your God. Why do you not conclude by the experience you have of things present at least, the vanity of these hopes and expectations of the future? Learn, poor mistaken Wretches, learn what reception you are like to find after Death by the entertainment you meet with during your Life. The greater, and if your selves may be credited, the better part of you are pinch'd with Hunger and Thirst, labour

bour under Poverty and Misery; and God suffers or dissembles all this; either will not or cannot provide for his own; Insomuch that he must be either impotent or unjust. Canst thou who flatterest thy self with an Immortality after this Life, be ignorant of thy present state, art not sensible of thy frailty when thou art under apprehension of an impending; or the real pressure of any actual Calamity, in the Flames of a Fever, or the Tortures of Pain? Obstinate Wretch! who will not confess the Misery he feels. But these small matters apart: See here the Instruments of Torment, the Racks and the Crosses, no longer to be adored, but now to be endured; and the Fires you so much fear, and to which you predestinate others. Where is this God that can raise the Dead, but cannot deliver the Living? The *Romans* without any assistance of his, are they not Lords of the World, and of your selves too? They possess all things; while you by your apprehensions and scruples debar your selves of the most laudable enjoyments
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and comforts of Life. You neither appear at our publick Shews nor Pomps: You absent your selves from our solemn Festivals, and sacred Combats: You abhor the Meat that our Priests have but touched, and the Wine that returns from the Altars. It seems you even fear the Gods you do not believe. You refuse to crown your Heads with Flowers, and reserve your perfumes for the Dead; you will not so much as grace a Sepulcher with a Garland: but always look pale and tremble; worthy indeed of Compassion, but of that of our Gods. To be short, you neither rise from the Dead, nor partake of the Comforts of Life. Therefore if you can make the least pretence either to Modesty or Wit, let the Destiny of the World, and the Heavens alone; take care of your selves, look under your Feet, that's employment enough, especially for such rude, illiterate ignorants as you, incapable of understanding the things of Earth, much more those of Heaven. But if you must commence Philosophers, such great Pretenders should

Socrates

Socrates ; who is the Prince of Wisdom. Every body knows the Answer he returned to the inquisitive about Divine things ; *That which is above us does not touch or concern us.* At the same time he had a just Reputation for extraordinary Wisdom, and found it was not for knowing every thing, but for knowing he knew nothing, that the Oracles pronounced him the wisest of the *Greeks*. Accordingly it is most sovereign Wisdom to confess our Ignorance. From whence the Opinion of *Arcefilas*, *Carneades*, and many of the *Academicks* was derived, who suspended their Judgment as to the solution of Questions of high import, and extream difficulty. Which indeed is most advisable both for the Honour of the Learned, and the Safety of the Ignorant. Whereby *Simonides* made himself so famous in that excellent Answer of his that deserved a Statue, and to be propos'd as an Example to all Ages. For being required by King *Hiero* to deliver his Opinion concerning the Gods, he first demanded one day to consider of it

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in, and that being expired, two or three more. At length after many delays, the King, surpris'd at his remissness press'd him to Answer. *The more I consider it, said he, the more difficulty I find to be in it.* Thus, in my Opinion, things that are arduous and uncertain we should leave undetermined, and not be arrogantly positive where the greatest Wits do but conjecture and deliberate. Otherwise we shall destroy all manner of Religion, and introduce the most intolerable Slavery and Superstition.

Well, said CECILIUS, ending here, with a smiling Aspect, for the Imperuosity of his Discourse had taken away all his Anger, What Reply shall we have to this from that Man there of PLAUTUS his Race, *the first of Bakers and the last of Philosophers?*

Spare him a little, said I, you are not to triumph before the Victory, nor to value your self too much upon your jolly Harrangue. You must remember you contend for Truth and not for Applause. And tho' I must own, your Discourse

Discourse pleased me extremely by its Subtlety and admirable Variety: Yet I am sorry and more concerned to see Truth change sides, and vary according to the Address of the Speaker, to see all things rendred intricate and obscure by Artifice, that are clear and evident in themselves. We suffer our Thoughts to be led captive by the Beauty of a Discourse, and to be diverted by the excellence of the manner, from weighing the merit of the things that are spoken, neither discerning the Truth, nor being apprized that a very incredible matter may be true, and that the most plausible appearances are oft enough false. Thus an easie credulity in assenting to every thing that is presented in a fair Light, gives those that are skilful in the Arts of the Tongue the greatest advantage in point of Dispute, till at last finding our selves imposed upon at every turn; instead of blaming our own Negligence and want of due Caution, we exclaim against the Uncertainty of things, and had rather condemn and disbelieve all, than acquiesce in any decision

cision of matters so fallible and doubtful. We are to be careful lest this brings us to an abhorrence of all manner of Discourse and of Men too. For they who are apt to believe finding themselves deceived by Persons they had a good Opinion of, run into an Error of a contrary Extreme, suspect all the World, and distrust even those they might safely confide in. Forasmuch then as every one, as strenuously as he can, endeavours to defend his own Tenets, and on one side Truth may be more obscure, and on the other Subtlety or Eloquence so prevalent as to persuade even that which is not. We ought to examine every particular as nicely as we can, and commend Subtlety, but not believe it.

You act the part of an unbiass'd Arbitrator indeed, said CECILIUS, to come and interrupt the Dispute with a Speech that evacuates the Force and Credit of all that I have said, OCTAVIUS himself being prepared to answer distinctly and separately to every Point.

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If he well considers it, said I, he'll find what you reprehend to be as much for your own advantage as mine. I lay down this as a Test, whereby you may discern whether the Sentence I shall pronounce, be supported by the strength of Reason, or the Pomp of Eloquence; and I must no longer withhold your attention, since OCTAVIUS himself, as you say, is prepared to speak, and let nothing prevent our giving him an equal Audience.

I will speak, said OCTAVIUS, to the best of my capacity; but we must endeavour both of us to forbear Calumny and personal Reflexions, and dissipate those dark Clouds by the bright Rays of Truth. And in the first place I take the freedom to tell you, that you attributed so great an Uncertainty to the things you discours'd of, that you gave me some Reason to imagine your Notions of them were but superficial and confused, or that you had quite lost your self. For one while you acknowledged you believed the Gods, and afterwards you knew not what to believe; as if by such Parrying and Am-

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biguity you designed to clude and put by the Force of an Answer. But I cannot believe that of CECILIUS, those little Evasions are far from his Spirit; and tho' he is subtle, yet he is innocent. It rather happened to him as to those who are ignorant of the way, when they see several paths they are at a stand, not daring to adventure upon any one, nor approve of them all. So he that has no assurance of Truth is nonplust at every difficulty he meets with, and changes his Opinion as oft as opposite Reasons are objected against it. We must not wonder then to find CECILIUS so unsteady and inconstant in this Rencounter, but that he may no longer, float upon the Waves of Uncertainty, I'll shew him the Truth. And whereas he is so highly offended to see Men of that Poverty and Ignorance he objects to us, dispute of things Divine; he must know that all Men without any exception to Age, Quality, or Sex, are born rational, that the Faculties of the Mind are not the gifts of Fortune: That the Philosophers themselves, as well as other celebrated Inventers of Arts

and Sciences, before they discover'd their Knowledge and Capacity by the excellence of their Productions, were look'd upon as the Scum of the People ; so true it is, that the Rich, (Idolaters of their Treasure) contemplate their Gold more than Heaven ; and they were poor like us, who first discovered Truth, and imparted it to others. A sound Mind is not a retainer to Wealth, nor the Acquisition of Study, but an Advantage and Endowment of Nature ; We should not then repine nor be displeased at the freedom that is taken by any to enquire about things Divine, and to express themselves as they think fit : We ought not to regard the Quality of the Speaker, but the Quality of his Words : Beside, Truth the more unprovided it is of the exterior Ornaments of Speech, the more visible it appears, when free from Disguise of Artifice and Eloquence it remains in its genuine Purity, as it ought to do, to be the Rule and Standard of Good and Evil. Nor do I deny what CECILIUS has given himself so much trouble to prove,

that Man ought to know himself, and consider his End, his Nature, and his Origine: Whether he was made by a Fortuitous Complication of Elements, or a Conflux of well disposed Atoms, or whether it was not God himself that created and form'd him: But of this we must be ignorant without some knowledge of this Universe, and consequently of its Author. These are things of such close Connexion and Dependence, that we cannot know Man without some previous knowledge of God; as we cannot be capable of Civil Affairs without some understanding of the State of the World in general. And indeed since herein we differ from the Beasts, that as they are bow'd down towards the Earth, where they are to find their Pasture, we have an erect Stature and elevated Aspect, to contemplate the Heavens, and Reason both discovers a God, and renders us like him, we cannot without a Crime shut our Eyes against so great a Light, and it is a degree of a Sacrilege, to search for that in Earth which we ought to find, and account for in Heaven.

ven. And certainly he must be void both of Sight and Sense, who can imagine this great and wonderful Machine of the World was made by a casual Concourse of insensible Particles of Matter, and not by the Wisdom and Contrivance of a God. When we come to contemplate the whole System of Nature both above and below us, is any thing more evident than that it was a Divine and Excellent Spirit that first form'd by his Power, and still upholds and conducts it by his Providence? Consider the mighty extent and rapid course of the Heavens, when illuminated by the Stars, or the Rays of the Sun; you'll discover in that eternal periodical Movement the Divine Wisdom writ in Letters of Light. What shall we say of the great Luminary, and the Neighbouring Planet, the one by stated Revolutions measuring and dividing the year, the other by different Phases and Changes the Months, or of the eternal Vicissitude of Darkness and Light, which produce another of Labour and Rest? But I leave it to Astrologers to discourse

of the Stars and their Powers; of those that preside over the Fruits and the Harvest, and those that influence Navigation and the Wind, on which the Science of the Husbandman and the Pilot depends. That any thing could produce so many Wonders, and establish that harmonious Order and Regularity they inviolably observe, but a Divine Spirit and infinite Wisdom who can doubt? Who indeed, since we must be Masters of no less to comprehend them? Does not this Diversity of Times and Seasons which keep their due Distance, and constantly tread the same Rounds, proclaim its Author and celebrate his Praise? The Spring being necessary to produce the Flowers and Herbs; the Summer to ripen the Fruits and the Grain, the Autumn gradually and gently to perfect this Work, and the Winter no less for the Repose and Refreshment of Nature. This Order continues without interruption or alteration for so many Ages, but would soon be subverted, if Fortune were Mistress of the World. Beside, what Wisdom, to temper and
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adjust the Winter and Summer, by the Autumn and Spring, with so much Art and Exactness, that we pass, insensibly as it were, out of the Heat of the one, into the Cold of the other, without experimenting the Rigour of contrary Extremes ? Look upon the Sea, a little Sand serves to keep it within its Bound. See what a vast variety of Plants draw their respective nourishment out of the Bowels of the same Earth. Again, reflect upon the Flux and Reflex of the Ocean, the eternal sources that water the World, the Rivers and Aqueducts that perpetually circulate about the Earth, beautified with such a pleasing and useful variety of Plains, Valleys and Mountains ; inhabited by so many Animals, all plentifully provided with peculiar Accommodations for Life and Defence : Some armed with Horns and Hoofs, some with Teeth or Stings, some with Claws and Talons, others secur'd by Flight ; all endow'd by Nature with Agility, Strength, or Sagacity. But especially the Form of Man discovers a God to be his Author ;

erect Stature, his elevated Aspect where all the Senses keep their Residence as in a Royal Apartment, his Eyes as Sentinels placed on high. It would be endless to be particular. There is no part of Man which is not apparently either for Ornament or Use: And that Miracle to be all alike and all unlike! Then the Wonders of our Birth, the desire of Propagation, are they not from God? Who prepares the sweet Dew in the Mothers Breasts as a delicate and agreeable Nourishment for the little Creatures. Nay, he has not only made a general order of Provision for the whole, but extends a paternal Care to every part of the World. He heats *Britain* with the warm Vapours of the Sea, to supply the distance of the Sun: The *Nile* serves for Rain to *Egypt*. *Mesopotamia* is enriched and cultivated by *Euphrates*; the River that denominates, as 'tis reported, sows and waters *India*. When we enter into a well-contrived House very exquisitely furnished and adorned, can we deny that ever a Builder or a Master had been there: And have we not
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more reason to conclude that this stately Fabrick of the Universe, wherein we discover such admirable Order, and marks of Contrivance, was erected and adorned by a Mind and Wisdom infinitely exceeding them all? But perhaps you are willing to admit a Providence, you only doubt whether all things are under the Government of one God only. As to that you may be easily satisfied by considering the State of this World. Where did ever Royalty or Empire bear a Companion long? where did any such thing begin with Faith, or end without Blood? not to mention the Grandees of *Persia* who referred the Election of a Prince to the neighing of a Horse: To omit the Antiquated Story of the *Thebans*: every body knows the fatal Dissension of the two Brothers for a poor Kingdom of Shepherds, Inhabitants of Cottages. The Wars of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, put *Europe*, *Africk*, and *Asia*, into Convulsions, and so great an Empire could not bear the Father and the Son-in-law. Nay the Bees have one King; the Heards but one Leader, and
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can you imagine two Lords to be in Heaven? Thou art not ignorant sure that the Author of Nature is without Bounds; has neither Beginning nor End, that his Eternity is from himself, as the Commencement and Existence of all other things is from him? Who, before the World had a Being, was a World to himself, his own Occupation and Glory: Who created all things by his Word, disposes and orders them by his Wisdom, preserves and perfects them by his Power. He is not seen, being more subtile than the Sight. Not to be comprehended, being above comprehension, and greater than all the Senses. He is immense, infinite, known only to himself, our Minds are too narrow to conceive him. We never comprehend him better than in confessing him to be Incomprehensible. Who ever thinks he knows it, lessens his Majesty, and he that will not diminish it, must not pretend to know it. Should you ask his Name, it is impossible to give him one suitable to his Perfections, his Name is G O D. If I call him Father, you'll presently conceive him under the Notion

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on we have of a Father: If I call him King or Lord, you'll do the same. Separate all that is of Earth from those terms, and thou hast discovered what he is. All Men are agreed in the Notion of him, when they stretch out their Hands to Heaven, they name no other but GOD; They ordinarily say God is great, God is just; and if it please God: thus they speak: And this is not so much the Confession of a Christian, as the Voice of Nature. Those that will have *Jupiter* to be Sovereign Lord of all, are only mistaken in the Name; they agree with us as to one Power: The Poets likewise sing of one Father of the Gods of Men, and say that he forms our very thoughts at his pleasure. What says *Virgil*, is he not more express and near to Truth? That from the beginning there was but one only Mind or Spirit that filled Heaven and Earth, the Soul of the World. That from him Men, and all other Animals derived their Being. And in another place, he calls this Spirit GOD, he adds that he is present in all Climates and all Regions, and that it is he who forms
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the Tempests and the Thunder; we say so too: And can produce if you please a particular account of the Opinion of the Philosophers, you'll find them to be of the same mind, altho' they express themselves differently. I pass by the first who by their Doctrine deserved the Name and Title of Sages. Because *Thales* the *Milesian*, the eldest of them all, who first disputed publickly of Celestial Questions, says Water is the Principle, out of which the Spirit form'd all things, and adds that, to know the manner how they cooperated together herein, is not in the power of Man, but that God, who is this Spirit, has revealed it. You see how the Opinion of the first of the Philosophers and ours accord. Afterward *Anaximenes*, and in succeeding times *Diogenes* surnamed the *Apolloniate*; said God is of an Aereal Nature, immense and infinite; neither do these differ with us, *Anaxagoras* was of Opinion that God is an infinite Spirit; *Pythagoras* is of the same, and says, he is diffused thro' all the World, imparting Life and Existence to all things. *Xenophanes* will have God
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be an Animated Infinity. *Antisthenes* taught that different Countries had different Gods, but that there is but one only who is by nature G O D. *Spensippus* thought God to be that natural and animal Virtue, or Power whereby all things are regulated, disposed, and conducted. *Democritus* himself, altho' the Inventer of Atoms, does he not often assert that God is that Original Nature, and that Intelligence that produces Ideas? *Strato* held likewise that he is Nature. *Epicurus* himself, who either believed there were no Gods, or that they remained in a state of profound Idleness, exalts Nature above all. *Aristotle* is not always of the same Mind: Nevertheless, he establishes one supreme Power: which one while he'll have to be a Spirit; another while the World, at other times somewhat without the World. *Heraclides*, surnamed the *Pontick*, gives the Superintendency to a Divine Spirit, but is not always consistent with himself, no more than *Theophrastus*, *Zeno*, *Chrysippus*, and *Cleanthes*. But all admit but of one
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Providence. *Cleanthes* says, sometimes that God is a Spirit, and sometimes that he is a Fire, sometimes likewise he says he is an Intelligence. *Zeno* his Master believes him to be the Eternal Law that is essential too, and inseparable from the Nature of things: And sometimes that he is a Fire and an Intelligence; and demonstrates the prevailing Opinion concerning the Gods to be a vulgar Error, that by *Juno* we are to understand the Air; by *Jupiter* the Heavens, by *Neptune* the Sea, and the like. *Chrysippus* says almost the same, that God is a Divine Power, an intellectual Principle, tho' sometimes he believes the World and Fate to be God, and imitates *Zeno* in the Interpretation of the Fables of the Gods that occur in the Books of *Homer*, *Hesiod* and *Orpheus*. *Diogenes*, he that is surnamed the *Babylonian*, explains *Jupiter's* Lying in, and the Birth of *Minerva*, as relating only to things of Nature, and not to the Gods. *Xenophon* the Disciple of *Socrates* holds that the true God is not to be seen, and therefore we are not to attempt

tempt it. *Aristo* of the Isle of *Chio* says he is incomprehensible. *Plato* speaks more expressly of the Divinity, and is less mistaken in the Name and the Thing. Indeed he would be all *Divine*, if he had not contracted some Secular Defilements. He says in his *Timeus*, that by the Name of G O D we denote the Father of the Universe, the Creator of the Soul, incomprehensible by reason of his Immensity, and not to be discovered to the World, if we could attain to a Comprehension of him. We say almost the same. And altho' we know God and confess him to be the Father of the Universe, we do not make a publick Declaration of our Opinion, unless Necessity or good Reason obliges us so to do. Thus I have given you the Opinion of almost all the Philosophers, and shewn that altho' they express themselves differently, they all believe but one and the same GOD: which is extremely to their Glory; and a Proof that either the Christians are Philosophers, or the Philosophers were Christians. If there be a Providence

dence then; if the World be governed by one God only, we should not hearken to Fables of Antiquity, contradicted by Reason, and damn'd by the Philosophers of all Ages. For such was the Credulity of our Forefathers that they believed things incredible: *A many-bodied-Scylla*, a *Chimera* of various forms, a *Hydra* that revived and renewed by his Wounds, and *Centaur*s half Men and half Horses. Any thing that fanciful or designing Men would have them believe, of the Metamorphoses of Men into Birds, and Beasts into Men, and Men again into Flowers and Trees. And so many things of the like Nature, that some of them would have happened since, if they had ever been at all; but we see no such thing, it being impossible. Thus by a strange Simplicity and Silliness they took up their Belief of the Gods: For by adoring their Kings, and desiring to perpetuate their Memory by Pictures and Statues, what they at first invented to ease their grief for the Loss of them, was afterwards converted into Religion.

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Before the World was open to Commerce, which was soon succeeded by an exchange and intermixture of Customs and Ceremonies, every Nation adored its Founder, some great Leader, a Virtuous and Valiant Queen, the Inventer of some Art, or the Author of somewhat useful and beneficial to Men, whereby they thought to discharge the Obligation they were under to the Memory of those illustrious Persons, and to recommend the Example of such excellent Virtues to the imitation of Posterity. Examine History, and you'll agree to me, that Men were deified either for their Benefactions or their Merit. *Eubemerus* gives an account in order of their Birth, their Country, and their Name, and shews the places of their Sepulchers. He proves by instances of the *Dictæan* JUPITER, the *Delphick* APOLLO, the *Egyptian* ISIS, the *Eleusinian* CERES, and others, that they were ranked among the Gods, who by running about the World made discoveries to any Country of such Grain or Fruits that

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were unknown there before, or of any other Invention useful and serviceable to human Society. *Perseus* says the same, and withal that the things they discovered bore their Name, which is verified in the Words of the Poet, *Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus flags.* *Alexander* the Great, in a long Discourse he wrote to his Mother, informs her, that through Compulsion he had prevailed with a Priest to discover the Mystery of the Gods, he makes *Vulcan* the first of them all, next *Jupiter* and his Race. Reflect upon the Cittern of *Isis* with her Swallow, and the vain Tomb of the God that Egypt adores, who was torn in pieces. In all your Ceremonies, in all your Mysteries, you may read the miserable end, the Death and Funeral of your Gods. *Isis* bewails the Loss of her Son, in the company of her Bald-pated Priests, and her *Cynocephalus*: the mournful *Isacks* beat their Breasts in imitation of the more mournful Mother. Immediately after to her great Joy she recovers her Son; the Priests make loud Acclamations, and *Cynocephalus* has the Glory of finding

ing him. Thus they fail not every year to lose what they find, and find what they lose ; but is not it shameful to lament what they adore, or adore what they lament ? Notwithstanding such are the Devotions of *Egypt*, and now of *Rome*. *Ceres* surrounded with Serpents, a Flambeau in her Hand, and full of Sorrow searches for her Daughter they have taken from her ; these are the Mysteries of *Eleusina*. Those of *Jupiter* are no less ridiculous ; a She-goat serves for a Nurse, a Child is conveyed away, lest he should be devoured by his Father, the *Corybants* strike their Cymbals, that his Cries may not be heard ; to proceed, *Cybele* chastises her Lover because he cannot resolve to caress the *Mother of the Gods*, as being too old and ugly for him. You'll say she design'd to make an *Eunuch-God*. For her Priests adore this Wretch by a voluntary Submission to the same Misfortune. Are these Religious Rites, or Bloody Executions ? As to the Figure you give your Divinities, can any thing be more shameful or infamous ? *Vulcan* is represented as a Limping God. *Apollo* has

no Hair upon his Chin, after so many Ages, but his Son *Esculapius* has a venerable Beard. *Neptune's* Eyes are Blue, *Minerva's* Gray, *Juno's* are like a Bull's, *Pan* has Goats-feet, *Saturn's* are fettered with Iron, *Mercury* has Wings, *Janus* two Faces, as if he went backwards: *Diana* is habited with hunting Accoutrements. At *Ephesus* she has an infinity of Breasts, where she is painted as the Goddess of Hell, she has three Heads, and as many Hands. Your *Jupiter* himself is sometimes without a Beard, and sometimes with one. When he is *Ammon*, he has Horns; when *Capitolinus*, he wields the Thunder-Bolt, when *Latialis*, he is covered with Blood, when *Feretrius*, dumb. To make short of it, so many Names, so many Monsters: *Erigone* must be hanged in a Halter to shine among the Stars. *Castor* and *Pollux* share a divided Immortality, and live and die by turns. *Esculapius* in order to his Deification is struck Dead with a Thunder-bolt. *Hercules* must be refined by Fire from all his Earthly Allay. These Fables are taken upon trust, as they are trans-

transmitted to us by our ignorant Predecessors, and their Posterity employ their Wit and Industry to cultivate and improve them. Especially the Poets, whose Reputation has been very prejudicial to Truth. Wherefore I *lato* had reason in my Opinion for excluding *Homer* out of his Common-wealth with all his Fame and Renown. For he is most guilty of mixing your Gods with the things of the World, altho' possibly he might do it in Raillery. He makes them go together by the Ears in the Wars of *Troy*, he wounds *Venus*, puts *Mars* in Chains, gives him the Bastinado, and makes him fly. He delivers *Jupiter* by the happy Intervention of *Briareus*, when just at the point of being hamper'd by the rest of the Gods. He makes him weep a Shower of Blood for the Death of his Son *Sarpedon*, which he was unable to prevent. He describes him charmed with the Girdle of *Venus*, and caressing *Juno* with more passion and vigour then he could express to any of his Mistresses. In one place he makes *Hercules* cleanse a Stable.

ble. *Apollo* *Admetus* his Herdsman. *Neptune* commends himself to *Laomedon* for building the Walls of *Troy*, and to be so ill used as to receive no Wages for his pains. In another he hammers *Aeneas* his Arms, and *Jupiter's Thunder-Bolts* on the same Anvil : As if Heaven and its Thunder, which no *Cyclops* could ever imitate, or *Jupiter* himself ever cease to fear, were not of longer date than his Birth in *Crete*. What say ye to *Mars* and *Venus*, taken in the Act of Adultery, and *Jupiter's Crime* with *Ganymede* now consecrate in Heaven? All these Fables were invented to authorize the Vices of Men. It is by these Fictions and agreeable Lyes that young People are debauched, they are instilled in their Youth, and encrease with their Years, while Truth is exposed to the view of all the World, but then we must open our Eyes. All the Ancient Authors of *Greece* and *Italy* write, that *Saturn* the first of the Tribe, was but a Man. *Nepos* and *Cassius* say the same in their History, as do *Thallus* and *Diodorus*. This *Saturn* then, to escape the violent

lent hands of his Son, fled into *Italy*; where he was kindly entertained by *Janus*. And being a *Greek* and well accomplished, he instructed those *Barbarians* in several things they were ignorant of before; as particularly to form Letters, to stamp Money, and to make divers sorts of serviceable Instruments. He call'd this Country *Latium*, because he absconded here. He made a Town likewise bear his name to perpetuate his Memory, as *Janus* gave his to a Mountain for the same end. He was a Man then that thus fled and absconded, he was the Father of a Man, and the Son of a Man; if he was called the Son of Heaven and Earth, it was because his Origine was unknown to the *Italians*, as we still say of those who surprize us by a sudden and unexpected appearance that they dropp'd out of the Clouds, and of those whose Birth we are ignorant of, that they are Sons of the Earth. *Jupiter* reign'd in *Crete* after his Fathers Expulsion, there he had Children, and there he was interred: His Sepulchre is to be seen at this Day; and the Ceremonies that are used to celebrate, dishonour

his Memory, by betraying his Mortality. It would be tedious to go thro' his whole Genealogy. To prove the Father was a Man, is sufficient to make appear the Children were so: Unless you can think you deified those you have consecrated after Death; if so, the Perjury of *Proculus* might make a God, and *Juba* is justly enroll'd among the Immortals, because the *Africans* were pleas'd to adore him. In a Word, Kings were not ranked among the Gods to create a Belief of their being such; it was a profound Respect they paid to the sublime Character of Royal Dignity. To be honour'd with those vain Ceremonies was against their consent. They were for continuing Men as long as they could, and believ'd so little of their becoming Gods this way, that they were but too apprehensive of it, even in the latest moments of their advanced years. Those that die then are not Gods, because Gods die not; neither can those that are born and know a Beginning be so, because they must die. But the Divinity has neither Beginning

ginning nor End. If Gods have been Midwifed into the World heretofore, Why not now? You'll say perhaps of *Jupiter*, that Age has rendered him impotent, and of *Juno* and *Minerva* that they have pass'd their teeming Time: Or rather have they not ceased to engender since Men have ceased to believe? Surely if the Gods could beget them, their Children would be Immortal, and the number of Deities would long since have infinitely exceeded that of Men: I question whether Heaven and Earth would suffice to contain them. It's manifest then that those Gods whose Death as well as Birth we are made acquainted with, were certainly Men. Who doubts but the Beauty and Richness of the Work have made their Statues be adored? Who doubts but the Ignorant Vulgar have been charm'd by those Master-pieces of Art, and dazled by the Glory, Lustre, and Magnificence of the Gold, the Silver, and the Ivory? But if you'll please to consider, how these Figures are made, after what sort they are carved and fashioned, you'll blush to own your Fear of those Materials

rials that were oblig'd to the Tools of an Artificer for being a God. The wooden God which was perhaps once a Remnant of a Gallows, or somewhat as Infamous, is hung up, hacked and hewed, smoothed, and planed. That of Silver or Copper, owes his first Principles to a decay'd Kettle, or it may be, some viler Utensil (as often happened to the King of *Egypt*) and is Deified on an Anvil by dint of Hammer. That of Stone is cut, form'd and polished, sometimes by a very paultry and wretched Workman; but is altogether as insensible of the Indignities he sustains before, as of the Honors that are conferred on him after his Consecration. But perhaps he is no God while he is in the Rough, meer Stone, Wood or Silver. When is it then that he becomes so? When he is cast, shaped and polished? he is not a God yet. Is it when he is cemented, joyned, erected? yet he is no God. But when does he put on that Character, when he is habited, consecrated and pray'd too? Here his Divinity commences. That is, when Men

Men are pleas'd he shall be a God, he is one, and not before. But the most contemptible Animals, the Mice, the Bats and the Owls, will inform ye what Mettle your Gods are made of; they know them to be void of Sense, they tread on 'em, scratch and bite 'em, and if you did not interpose would build their Nests in the Mouths. The Spiders veil their Faces with their Webs, and fasten their Nets to their Ears. You rub, scower and cleanse them, you fear Gods that your own hands have made, and worship Divinities your selves must defend and repair. And all this for want of discerning that you ought to know God before you worship him; and because you will shew a blind conformity to the Practice of your Forefathers; and had rather err with others than believe your own Judgment; to be short, because you neither know what you worship, nor what you Fear. Thus Avarice came to be consecrated in those costly Statues of Gold and Silver; hence the *Roman* Superstition, and that multitude of Ceremonies was derived, where-

wherein there are so many things to be ridicul'd, and so many to be lamented. Some run about Stark-naked in the midst of Winter ; others with Phantastick Caps on their Heads, carry old Bucklers, tabor on the Skins, and lead their Gods a begging from door to Door. They have Temples into which none are to enter but once a year ; others that are always shut up. There are into which no Women, some into which no Men are ever admitted. You have Ceremonies where it is a Crime for a Slave to be present ; Statues that must not be crown'd, unless by a Woman who hath known but one Man, others that cannot be crown'd but by those who have known many ; accordingly a most zealous and devout Search is made for the most famous Prostitute of the Town. As to those that offer Effusions of their Blood to the Gods, and supplicate them with gaping Wounds ; Is it not better be prophane then express our Devotion at that expence ? And those that Castrate themselves upon the same Account ; do they

they not offend God by such a Pretence of doing him Honour? For he could produce them, without having recourse to such unnatural and bloody Methods, if he required the Devotion of Eunuchs. Is it not clear that Men must be out of their Wits to be guilty of such madness, and all the Patronage of the Folly lies in the Number of the Fools? Well, but notwithstanding to this great Devotion, you say, the Establishment and Encrease of the *Roman* Empire is to be ascribed, and that prodigious pitch of Grandeur to which it is now arrived. For the *Romans* were not so Eminent and Illustrious even for their Virtue, as their Piety and Devotion. Yes doubtless they have left very signal Testimonies, and marks of their Honour and Justice from the very Infancy of their Empire. What was it that collected and united them at first, and rendred them so formidable to their Neighbours? was it not their Crimes, wherein the Foundation of their Empire was laid? At the beginning it was a Sanctuary for Thieves, Traitors, Assassins,

fassins and Sacrilege; and that he who had the first Command might appear likewise to be the Principal Villain among them, he kill'd his Brother. These were the first and happy Omens of this Pious City. Soon after against the Law of Nations, by force of Arms, they seize and carry off, Women that were Strangers to them, already promised, already contracted, and some of them actually Marry'd to others, they Ravish and Deflower them. In the next place they make War against their Fathers, against those whose Daughters they had so lately espoused, and shed their Blood of their nearest Allies. What greater Villany could their Impiety conceive, or their Impudence commit? In short, to exterminate their Neighbours, to rife Temples and Altars, to demolish and erase Cities, to lead the Inhabitants Captive, to aggrandize themselves by Robbery and the Ruin of Men, is the established Doctrine of *Romulus*, and the Practice of his Successors. Infomuch that all they have, all they possess, nay, all they

they adore, is nothing but Rapine; their Temples are built of the Spoils of Nations, the Sackage of Towns, the Pillage of Altars, the Plunder of Gods, and the Murther of Priests. What more impious Profanation then to fall prostrate before Gods you have led Captive in Triumph; To adore what we take by hostile and unlawful means, is to consecrate Theft, and consequently so many Victories, so many Crimes, so many Trophies, so many Sacrileges: It was not therefore Religion, but Impiety; not any singular Devotion, but a prosperous Villany, that rais'd them to the Grandeur they are now in. For how could they conciliate the Favour of those Gods against whom they took up Arms, and never honoured before they had insulted and blasphemed? And thenceforward what could they do for the *Romans*, who could do nothing against them in defence of their own Worshippers? As to their proper and peculiar Gods, who they were at first we very well know, *Romulus, Picus, Tiberinus, Consus, Pilumnus, Picumnus, Clo-*
acina

acina, introduced by *Tatius*. *Fear* and *Paleness*, both honoured with a Temple by *Hostilius*: As another consecrated a *Fever*. Behold thy Protectors, O *Rome*, Diseases and Calamities: And the two famous Strumpets, *Flora* and *Acca Laurentia*, who are numbred with thy Divinities, may well be numbred among thy Plagues. Are these the Gods, think ye, that aggrandiz'd the *Roman* Empire, who vanquish'd the *Thracian Mars*, and the *Cretian Jove*, the *Juno* of *Argos*, of *Samos*, and of *Carthage*; the *Ephesian* or *Scythian Diana*; the Mother of the Gods, and the Monsters of *Egypt*? What likelihood that these Gods should joyn with the *Romans* in opposition to Nations that had adored them for so many Ages? Is it because they are better serv'd at *Rome*, by Priests more holy and Virgins more chaste? A greater number of Vestals have been punished for Incest, then have maintained their Honour; and the detected were not perhaps the most criminal, but the most unfortunate. As to the Priests, where do they manage the Procuring Trade

Trade with more Assurance and Address than in the Temples and near the Altars? There they are always ready to assist in libidinous Intrigues and designations of Adultery. And in their Cells Lewdness is more rampant than in the common Stews. But have there not been as great Empires and flourishing States before all these Superstitions were invented? Of the *Assyrians*, the *Medes*, the *Persians*, of the *Greeks*, and the *Egyptians*; altho' they had neither *Pontiffs*, nor *Arvales*, nor *Salians*, nor *Soothsayers*, nor *Vestals* nor *Chickens* to be Moderators of the Republick, whose eating or refusing gave a Shock to the Affairs of the whole World. But to come to those Auguries that were so propitious to all that observ'd, and so fatal to those that contemn'd them; it was without doubt for disregarding the solemn motion of the *Chickens*, that the Armies of *Claudius*, *Junius*, and *Flaminius* were defeated: But *Regulus* observed the Soothsayers, and was taken notwithstanding; *Mancinus* obey'd them, but was forced to surrender and submit

to dishonourable Terms. The *Chickens* of *Paulus* are very promisingly before the Battel of *Canna*; yet he perished, and the greater part of the Commonwealth with him. *Cesar* slighted the Augurs that were against his passing into *Africk* before Winter, but made a prosperous Voyage, and return'd victorious; you may safely say, that promoted his Success. Of Oracles we have enough. *Amphiaraus* could predict things after his death, but knew not what would befall himself during his Life, and how his Wife would betray him for a Necklace. *Tiresias* could see into Futurities, but could not see the present. *Ennius* counterfeited the *Pythian* Oracle without incurring any Damage, knowing *Apello* to be silent: For the Oracles ceased as Men became more polite and less credulous. *Demosthenes* accused the *Priestess* of *Delphos* of siding with a Party, and said she *Philippiz'd*. But Oracles surely, you'll say, have sometimes spoke Truth. Altho' it is not matter of surprize that they should do so among so many falsities, for Fortune and good guessing might do that which
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was ascribed to other Causes. Notwithstanding I will shew you the Source of this Delusion, enlighten and discover the very bottom of this Abyss of Darkness. There are certain vagrant and malign Spirits, who have ruin'd their native Beauty by Defilements of the World. These Wretches fallen from their Original Perfection, and plung'd into a State of Sin and Misery, think to ease themselves by pushing others headlong into the same accursed condition; as they are corrupt, they find no satisfaction but in corrupting, and being for ever alienated from God, cannot endure that any should approach him. The Poets and Philosophers call them Demons; and one of them was a Familiar to *Socrates*. The surprizing Feats and Inchantments of Magicians are perform'd by their Assistance, whereby we are prevail'd with to think we see what we do not, and to imagine we do not see what we actually do; and all other marvellous effects of the like Nature we have any account of. Yet *Sophenes* the first of them both in Science

and Practice, gives God the Honour that is due to him, and says, the Angels are his Ministers and Messengers, and adore his Majesty with Fear and Trembling: He adds, that the Demons are terrestrial, vagabond Spirits, and Enemy's of Men. *Plato* who found it so difficult to comprehend God is more clear as to these. He discourses of Demons and Angels, and endeavours in the Dialogue of the Banquet, to express the Nature of the first: he says it is a middle Substance between Mortal and Immortal, that is, between Body and Spirit, partly Terrestrial, and partly Celestial. He believes moreover, they cause our vicious desires; insinuate themselves into our Hearts, move our Senses; form ill affections, and stir the Fires of Concupiscence in our Souls. These Demons then which are impure Spirits, as appears by the Authority of Magicians, Philosophers and *Plato*, lodge themselves in Statues and consecrated Images, and by their presence there acquire as great Authority, as if God were present. They inspire their
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own Prophets, reside in Temples that are consecrated to them, convey themselves into the Entrails of Beasts, direct the Flight of the Birds, preside over Lots, render Oracles perplexed with Ambiguity and Lies: Deceiving and being deceived ; unable to know the Truth aright, and unwilling to publish that in their own wrong. They allure our Affections from Heaven to Earth, from the Creator to the Creature. Furthermore, they imbroil Life, and torment Men ; being subtle and invisible Spirits, pass insensibly into Bodies, form Diseases, fill the Soul with black and terrible Apprehensions, disable our Limbs, to constrain us to adore them, that when glutted with Blood and Sacrifice, they afterwards dissolve their Charms, we may attribute to them the Glory of the Cure. The Distracted you see run about the Streets are possessed and hurried by these damnable Spirits, and your own Prophets no less when they rage, and swell, and roll about : The Instigation of the Demons is alike in both, the Object of their

Fury different. *Jupiter's* Command for the Revival of the Games imparted in a Dream, the Ship following the Ladies Girdle, the Apparition of *Castor* and *Pollux*, and other Illusions you have recounted are to be ascribed to them. Many of you know very well the Demons are compelled to own as much, when we expel them out of Bodies, and force them to make their *exit* by Words that torment, and Prayers that burn them. That *Saturn*, that *Jupiter*, that *Serapis*, and the rest of the Demons you adore, thro' the extremity of anguish and grief we inflict on them, confess what they are; and tho' shame should oblige them to an eternal concealment of it, especially in your presence, yet they reveal their accursed Estate. You may believe them, because they testify a Truth so much to their own disadvantage. For when we adjure them by the Name of the Living God, they quake in the miserable Bodies they possess; and if they depart not immediately they retire gradually in proportion to the Faith of the Patient, and

and the Grace of the Physician. Thus they fly the Christians when present whose Assemblies by your Hands they molest at a distance. To which end they disseminate the Hatred of our Religion in weak Minds; For nothing is so natural as to hate those we fear, to endeavour their destruction of whose Power we are apprehensive. Therefore they prepossess Mens Minds, and engage them against us before they know us, lest they should entertain a good affection for us when they do. But it is a piece of great Injustice to condemn that which we are ignorant of; and indeed we cannot deny but we are to repent of this ill Conduct our Selves: For you know we were once as you are, being under the same blindness, we had the same Sentiments. We believed the Christians adored Monsters, devoured Infants, concluded their Banquets with Incest; nor considering that this Charge was never proved, nor made appear; that neither in so long a Space of time, nor amidst so many repeated Assurances of Recompence and Pardon, no Person

has been found who could reveal the least of these Crimes. And certainly this Profession is so far from being any way Criminal, that none ever blush'd to own it. Those that are accused confess it publickly, look upon it as their Glory; and if they repent of any thing, it is that they were not such before. But Time was, when we who readily engaged in defence of the Sacrilegious, Incestuous and Parricides, would not so much as permit the Christians to be heard. And sometimes the Cruelty of our Mercy exceeded that of our Hatred, when we tried to preserve their Lives by an extorted Denial of their Faith. A strange Artifice! to employ the *Arms of Truth* to establish Falshood. And if any one thro' extremity of Torture was ever prevail'd upon to renounce his Religion, we us'd him as favourably, as if by that Abjuration, he had discharg'd himself of all the Crimes that were impos'd upon him. You see we had once the same Sentiments you have, and proceeded accordingly; whereas had we acted by Reason and not by In-

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stigation of those malign Spirits, we should not have compell'd the Christians to deny their Religion, but to own their Incests, their Debauches, their Profanations : For such are the Fictions wherewith the Demons have infected and poison'd the Minds of the little People, to make us appear odious and abominable among Men. But you are not to wonder if these Phantoms vanish at the Presence of Truth. It is the proper employment of these Monsters to invent and propagate Lying Reports. Hence that Story of our worshipping an Asses Head. Who can be Sot enough to adore, or rather, to believe any such thing, but those who can be guilty of the like Monstrosities ? For you consecrate Asses, and their Stables, with your Goddess *Hippona*, and worship them verily devoutly with *Isis*. You do the same to the Heads of Bulls and Rams, altho' you offer them in Sacrifice too. You place likewise among your Gods the Heads of Dogs and Lions intermixed, and Monsters half Goats and half Men. Do you not adore the Bull *Apis*, with the
Egypti-

Egyptians, and approve of their Religion towards Serpents and Crocodiles, and so many wild Beasts and Animals of the Air, the Earth and the Water? Who make it no less than Capital to kill one of these Gods: Unaccountable Frenzy! Nay, they fear the Acrimony of an Onion as much as their Goddess, and reverence a Fart no less than their God. Those that pretend we adore a certain part of our Priests, attribute likewise their own filthiness to us. For such infamous Devotion suits very well with their Debauches, who prostitute all the Members of both Sexes to each other; among whom all kind of Lewdness passes for Gallantry, who envying the Liberty of Women, commit the most dreadful Beastlinets: Fulsom Abominations! of which they are sometimes weary, but never ashamed. They voluntarily submit, which is a most incredible Prodigy, to the most cruel as well as infamous pain that can be inflicted or born by Men. For our part we are so far from acting, that we blush to hear these Villanies
nam'd.

nam'd. And I should think it a violation of Modesty so much as to mention them, even, in our own Defence. For you accuse us of Crimes we could not believe, if we did not see them practis'd among your selves. You charge us likewise with worshipping a Criminal and his Cross ; but can you be under so gross an Error, as to imagine a Man, much less a Malefactor could any way merit to be reputed or worshipp'd as a God ? He must certainly be miserable, whose whole dependence is on any Mortal, because when he dies, all his hopes die with him. The *Egyptians* indeed, make a Man the Object of their Devotion, whom they adore, supplicate, consult in their Difficulties, and honour with Sacrifice. But he who is a God to others, is but a Man to himself. Tho' he deceives his Worshipers, he cannot be deceiv'd in that respect. Flattery likewise treats Kings and Princes as Gods, whereas it suffices to give them those Honours that are warrantable and legitimate. Altho' I confess Honour to be more due to Merit,

Merit, as Love is to Virtue, and Beneficence in whomsoever they are found. But you call your Princes Gods, pray before their Image, invoke their Genius, that is their Demon; and 'tis of more dangerous consequence to be perjur'd by the Emperor, than to be perjured by *Jupiter*. Neither do we adore Crosses, or desire them. You perhaps adore them in your wooden Gods that are made of them. And what are your Banners and Standards, but Crosses magnificently guilt and adorn'd? Even your most glorious Monuments, the Trophies, have not only the Figure of a Cross, but of a Man Crucified. Certainly a Cross appears naturally in a Ship under Sail, or rowed with Oars; when a Yoke is erected it represents a Cross; when a Man prays to God with his Hands stretched out, he makes the same Figure. So that the Sign of the Cross is either Natural, or a part of your Religion. I would willingly make some reply to those that say or believe that the Murther of an Infant is the Ceremony of admission into our Mysteries. Who can have the Heart

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to spill the Blood of a little Innocent, guilty of nothing but of being Born? None can believe, but those who can commit so prodigious a Crime. You expose your Infants to Beasts and Birds of Prey, and strangle and stifle them as soon as they come into the World. Some by cruel Potions dispatch them in their own Bowels, extinguish the first Principles of the vital Flame, and make them expire before they are Born: All which you learn'd of your Gods: Yet *Saturn* did not expose, he devoured his Children. And the same little Creatures are sacrificed to him in some parts of *Africk*; where they prevent their crying by Caresses, and Endearments, lest the Gods should be offended by weeping Victims. It was the custom of the *Scythians* to sacrifice the Lives of Travellers they receiv'd under pretence of Hospitality and Protection. The *Gauls* offered humane, or rather inhumane Sacrifices to *Mercury*. The *Romans* in some of their Ceremonies buried a Male and a Female *Greek*, a Male and a Female *Gaul* alive. *Jupiter Lati-*
alis

alis is at this Day adored by the Mur-
ther of a Man, and as becomes a Son
of *Saturn*, will be fed with the Blood
of a Criminal. I believe from hence
Catiline and the Accomplices of his
Conspiracy, as an earnest of their strict
union, learn'd to drink humane Blood;
and *Bellona* to require the same of those
that are consecrated to her: It is a Me-
dicine you use likewise to cure an Epi-
lepsie; and the Remedy is a thousand
times worse than the Disease. Neither
are they far from this Crime who eat
of the wild Beasts just as they come
from the Amphitheater, all besmear'd
with Blood, and gorg'd with the Flesh
of Men. Now we are not permitted
to see or hear Murther; and do so
much abhor Blood that we abstain
even from that of Beasts. As to the
incestuous Banquets you object to us,
it is a Calumny invented by the De-
mons to blast the Glory of our Chasti-
ty, and deter Men from embracing
our Religion by the horror of so
great a Crime. What your Orator says
is a meer Scandal, and proves nothing,
and

and your selves more guilty of Incest than we. The *Persians* espoused their Mothers; in *Egypt* and *Athens* it was lawful for Brothers and Sisters to intermarry. The Histories and Tragedies you take so much delight in, glory in Incest; the Gods you adore commit it with their Mothers, their Daughters and Sisters. No wonder it is so frequent among your selves, since you have your Gods for your Accomplices. Moreover, you may be guilty of it when you least design it, for by exposing your Children, and executing your lascivious propensities in all places indifferently, what hinders but they may happen to fall in your way? Thus you accuse us of Incest falsely, but make no provision against your own committing it in earnest. The Christians make not an outside shew of Virtue, but settle and entertain it in their Heart, study not to appear chaste only, but to be so. One Marriage and one Wife contents us, or rather none at all. As to our Festivals, they are not only chaste, they are sober: Where we take not occasion
to

to indulge our selves with any Excess, our Feasts being qualified by the prudence of our Deportment, and the gravity of our Conversation. And as we are chaste in our Assemblies we are no less in all other Places. Many of us persist, but without any vanity on that account, in an inviolable Celibacy to our Lives end : So far from Incest that some out of modesty, decline the most innocent and allowable Pleasures. If we refuse your Purple and your Dignities, we are not therefore the Scum of the People ; and none should think it strange that we all aspire after the same Felicity, since we are all called to the same Hope, and have all obtained Peace by the same means. If we cannot converse but in private, you are not to infer that we dare not say a Word in publick ; your selves are the cause of this Silence, being either asham'd or afraid to hear us openly. That our numbers daily augment is to our Honour, and not a Crime. Our Children approve of our Conduct and manner of Life as the best, and Strangers continually joyn them-

themselves to us. It is not by any little mark upon our Bodies that we are known to each other, but by our Modesty and Innocence. And you hate us because we love and cannot hate. We call one another *Brethren*, because we have all one Father, one Faith, and one Hope. you are not distinguished by any such endearing Relations; but by mutual Envy and Hatred, and know no Fraternities but those of Murtherers and Parricides. Do you think our being without Temples and Altars is to hide what we adore? What Figure shall I represent God by, if Man himself be his Image? What Temple shall I raise for him whom the whole Universe cannot contain? Shall we who affect capacious and magnificent Palaces confine his immense Majesty to so narrow a Space? We had much better erect and consecrate to him Temples in our Souls, and Altars in our Hearts. And then to present him with Oblations and Sacrifices of things he made for my use, what is it but a rejection of his Bounty, and a Sin of Ingratitude?

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The Holocaust he requires is a pure Soul, a good Conscience, a sincere Faith. He is best served by an innocent Life: the exercise of Virtue is a continual Sacrifice: to forbear evil Actions the most acceptable Oblation; and to prevent the Ruin of another, a Victim he is most delighted with. These are our Sacrifices, these our Mysteries, and the most Devout among us is he who is most Just. But it is objected that we can neither shew the God we worship, nor see him our selves: For that reason we believe him, because we are made so sensible of his Being, but see him not. For in his Works, in all the Movements of Nature, his Power is discernable: In Thunder and Lightning it speaks to us; when he makes the Air serene and clear, it shines upon us. Never think it strange that thou dost not see God. The Winds move and shake every thing, but thou seest them not. The Sun that renders all things visible, is in some respects invisible; his Rays dazle us, and if we stand to take a full view of him, we lose our Sight: And canst thou

thou bear the Vision of him who illuminated the Sun, the source and Fountain of Light ; when even those fires of his that come out of the Clouds, with his Thunder, make thee flee and hide thy Head ? Thou wouldst behold God with thy carnal Eyes, and canst not so much as see the Soul that informs thee, whereby thou dost both speak and act. But notwithstanding all this, he may be ignorant of what we do ; being confined to Heaven, cannot acquaint himself in the Transactions of Earth. But how can he be distant from any of us who fills Heaven and Earth, and all imaginary spaces without the World ? Consider the Sun is placed in the Heavens, but sheds an universal Influence over all the World, and is omnipresent by his Light. How much more reason have we to believe, that God who made and consequently sees all things, from whom nothing can be hid or conceal'd, is present in darkness, and in the darkness of Man too ; for so I call our Thoughts ? We do not live under him, but if I may say so, with him : Neither

let us value ourselves upon our number: it may seem great in our own calculation; but in God's very inconsiderable. The distinction and division of Nations is from us; with God the whole Universe is but one Province. Princes cannot see, but by the Eyes of their Ministers, what passes in their several States: But this great Monarch of the World needs no Information or Intelligence from another. We are not only under his Eye, but in his Bosom. Was it in vain then, and to no purpose, say you that the *Jews* adored only one God, with Temples and Altars, and so great variety of Ceremonies? Your Error lies in a wilful omission of former and instanting only late events; for whilst they worshipped our God devoutly, religiously, and innocently; I say our God, because there is no other who is Lord of all the World, beside him; while they obey'd his wholesome Laws, of a small number, they became a great People; of Poor, they became Rich; of Slaves, Kings; all the Elements fought for them against their Enemies; by flight they defeated pursuers, and being

ing naked vanquished the Arm'd.
Turn over their Writings, or if you
like them better, those of the *Romans*,
read *Josephus* or *Julianus*, to pass by former
Authors. You'll find their Sins
drew upon them this Chastisement,
and that nothing besel them but what
they were forewarned would inevitably
happen, if they persisted in their Rebel-
lion. They abandon'd God before he
abandon'd them ; neither were they
as you blaspheme, taken captive with
him, but he delivered them up as De-
serters, to the cruelty of their Enemies.
As touching the Conflagration of the
World, and the difficulty of believing
how a sudden Fire should fall and con-
sume it, this can seem surprizing to none
but vulgar Apprehensions. For who
doubts but that which had a Beginning
will have an End, who doubts but that
which was made will perish ; and con-
sequently the Heavens, and all they
contain, as they had a beginning will
come to an end. As they are nourish-
ed by the Waters of the Sea, and the
Rivers, they will at last be consumma-
ted by Fire. It is an established Opi-

nion among the Stoicks, that the Universe its moisture being spent will be burnt up; the *Epicureans* are of the same, touching its Ruin, and the Conflagration of the Elements. *Plato* says the World undergoes great alterations in several parts, sometimes by Inundations, sometimes by Fires; and having said it is so contrived as to continue for ever, he subjoyns that God can destroy it nevertheless; and that in the event he will. And certainly it is no wonder that the Maker should demolish his Work. You see the Philosophers speak as we do, not that we tread in their Steps, but they drew these Truths out of our Prophets which they have disguised and misrepresented. Hence the most celebrated of them, *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, give such an imperfect and corrupt account of the State of Man after this Life. For, say they, Souls only are Eternal, and by perpetual Transmigration pass into new Bodies, even into those of Brutes, which is yet a greater depravation of Truth. Does such an Opinion become a Philosopher, or a Buffoon?

Buffoon? But it is enough that even your Sages themselves agree with us in some respects. And farther, who is so foolish or impious to assert that he who made Man at first cannot remake him? As he is nothing after Death, he was nothing before his Birth, and by the same Power he was created, he may be reduced out of nothing. Beside it is more difficult, to give being to that which before was not, than to restore what has been. Can you believe then that what's remov'd out of our Sight is lost likewise to the Divine Cognisance? The Body, whether reduced to Dust and Ashes, or dissolv'd by Water, does but disappear to us, it is committed to the Custody of the Elements. Neither do we think as you imagine, that any sort of Sepulture can obstruct our rising again, but we adhere to the antient Custom which is best. See, for our Consolation, how all the Revolutions and Variations of Nature exhibit and suggest as many Images and Meditations of a Resurrection. The Sun rises and sets, the Stars appear and dis-

appear, the Flowers die to live again ; the Trees renew their Life and Ver-
dure every year ; the Seed we sow cor-
rupts to revive, which without that
Corruption could not be effected. But
why then do not our Bodies like Plants
retain a latent Life in an apparent Death ?
Would you have them revive in their
Winter ? you must wait for their Spring
too. I am not ignorant that many ra-
ther hope than believe they shall be an-
nihilated after Death, out of just appre-
hensions of what they deserve, had ra-
ther die for ever than rise to suffer, and
are hardened in their Error by the Im-
punity they enjoy in this Life, and
the patience of God, whose Judgments
will be the more severe, the longer
they are delay'd. Mean time by the
Writings of the Sages, and the Ora-
cles of Poesie, Men are premonished
of a River of Fire, and a burning Lake,
prepared for the everlasting punishment
of the Wicked. Cautions hereof have
been given by the Report of Demons,
and the Responses of Prophets. Hence
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the Poets make *Jupiter* swear by the River of Fire, and the Darknes of Hell; who foreseeing the Punishments ordained for himself and his Worshippers, can never reflect on them without Horror. And these Torments are eternal: The principal Instrument in them the Fire, as if it were Intelligent, preserves and consumes, devours and sustains at the same time; like Lightning which blasts and wounds Bodies, but does not dissolve them; or like those flaming Mountains that always burn, but never decay. So these terrible Executioners, these hungry Flames are never satisfied, never extinguished; the Torment they inflict is the Fuel that feeds them. Whether God has cause to punish Infidelity and Impiety, none but the most profane can doubt, since it is no less a Crime to disown, than to offend our Lord and Master. But tho' our Acknowledgement of one God is so instrumental to recommend us to his Mercy, as a wilful Ignorance of him is enough to render any the Objects of his

his Anger; yet if you make a Comparison, the Christians will be found to be much better Men than the Infidels, altho' we have not so many Laws, nor so many Judges to restrain us. You prohibit Adultery, but you act it: Whereas we live religiously in the Married State. You punish Facts; with us Thought is criminal. You dread Men; we our own Conscience. Your Gaols are crowded with Malefactors; but when did you ever meet with a Christian there, unless a Martyr or a Renegade? As to the rest let no Man depend upon Destiny, or think to extenuate his Faults by charging them upon inevitable Fatality; we may impute our Misdemeanors to our circumstances as long as we please, our Will was always at Liberty, and the Action of Man is punished, not his Rank nor his Quality. What is Destiny, but what God has destined? who, being able to foresee the Matter of his Decrees, makes them according to the intrinsic Merit, the real Desert of all Men. He punishes our Vice, and not our Birth. But enough
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of this point; if it be requisite we will treat of it more amply some other time. That Poverty you reproach us with, is not our Shame but our Glory. As the Mind is dissipated and lost in Luxury, it is composed and recollected in Sobriety. But how can he be poor, who wants nothing, who desires nothing that is anothers, who is Rich towards God? He is poor who is anxious and unsatisfied in Riches. If I may speak my thoughts, we are all born poorer than we are. The Birds of the Air have no Inheritance, the Beasts of the Field no Revenue; yet they meet with a daily supply of their Wants. They were made nevertheless for us, and we possess all these things, if we do not covet them. As in a Journey, the less we carry with us, the lighter we are, so Poverty alleviates our Burthens in the Journey of Life, and prevents our sinking under the heavy load of Riches. Yet if we thought them necessary we would pray to God for them, and he could assign us a Portion of the vast Treasures that belong to him; But we had

had rather despise riches than possess'em. We covet Innocence, we pray for Patience; in a word, we love Integrity better than Luxury. It is not a Punishment to us, but an Exercise to undergo the Inconveniencies of Life, and the Infirmities of Nature. Our Faith is fortified, and our Virtue confirm'd by Afflictions and Trials. The vigour of the Body, and the faculties of the Mind grow torpid and useless, if they are not exercised, and all the great Men, whose Example you magnifie and recommend, owe their Fame to their Calamities. In our Sufferings God does not disregard, neither is unable to support us; for we know he loves his own, and has the whole World at his disposal. Adversity is the Test whereby he examines our Constancy and Resolution, even to the last extremity of Death it self, as knowing nothing can escape his Providence; he tries us by Affliction, as Gold is purified by fire: what an agreeable sight it is to God to behold a Christian bravely conflicting with pain, prepared to bid defiance to Persecutions, Menaces, and Torments, looking upon his Executioners with a compos'd and well supported

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ed aspect, and even insulting all the Terrors, the Instruments & Retinue of Death, defending his liberty against Princes and Emperors, and yielding to nothing but his God, whose he is; to be short triumphing over his Judges, for he is victorious who obtains what he contends for. Where is the Soldier that will not charge thro' the greatest dangers in the presence of his Prince? For no Combatant receives his Reward till he has fought. Now an Earthly Prince cannot confer what he has not; I mean he cannot prolong our days, altho' he may honour our Valor. But the Soldier of JESUS CHRIST is not abandon'd in danger; he triumphs even in Death. He may appear to be miserable, but is nothing less; you extol to the Skies those that have suffer'd couragiously, a *Mutius Scavola*, who had been put to a most painful Death, had he not so frankly exposed that Hand to the Flames that mis'd the King; & how many have there been among us, who without the least sign of complaint, have seen not only their Hands, but all their Members burnt, when they might have delivered themselves by a Word. But I cannot without
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out great Injustice make any comparison betwixt our Martyrs and your Heroes. Our Women and Children laugh at your Crosses and Racks, smile upon the wild Beasts, and submit to the most exquisite Tortures without a Sigh or a Tear, by virtue of the Patience God inspires them with. Mean time you cannot be ignorant, that as no Man will expose himself to such Sufferings but upon good grounds, so none could be able to bear them with such Constancy and Resolution without a Divine Assistance. Well, but those who know not God, flourish and abound in Riches and Honour; unfortunate Men, they are exalted so high, that their Downfall may be the greater. They are Beasts, fattened for Sacrifice, Victims that are crown'd before they are slaughter'd. If you reflect on their dissolute and exorbitant Life, you'll say, they are raised to Thrones, that they may have opportunities to abuse their Power, and Sin without controul. But without God where is any solid felicity to be found, since Death discovers all the
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to be no more than a Dream? Kings receive as much Fear as they give, and in the midst of the Crowds that attend them, are alone in danger. Art thou Rich? there's no depending on Fortune; and after all, so much Equipage for so short a way is an Encumbrance rather than of Use. Thou pridest thy self in thy Purple, and thy Dignities, but thy Vanity's unjust, the Scarlet's a poor and impertinent Ornament, if the Soul be defiled. Thou art great in Nobility, and high in Extraction: But dost thou not know we are all born equal, and that nothing but Virtue should make a distinction among Men? It is not without reason, the Christians who desire no Praise, but what they deserve for the Innocency of their Morals, and the Integrity of their Life, despise your publick Sights, your Poms and lewd Pleasures, and shun 'em as agreeable Corruptors. It is not without Reason that they abstain from those Ceremonies whose Origine and Institution they know so well. Who does not abhor in your Chariot-Races, the Tumult and
Fury

Fury of such vast Multitudes in Rage and Contention? Who is not astonished at the shews of the Gladiators, the Discipline of Murther? At the Theaters the Extravagance is no less, but the Infamy greater; where the Comedian by Action or Recital does more than represent Adultery, and a lascivious Buffoon who personates the amorous, teaches to make Love. There they dishonour your Gods by the Hatred, the Grief, the Lust they attribute to them. By counterfeit Woes, they draw true Tears from the Spectators; and you who desire real Murthers, weep over those that are Theatrical and Roman-tick. The hatred we bear to the Remainders of your Sacrifices, and the Wine of Effusion is not the effect of Fear or Superstition, but an assertion of our Liberty. For altho' the Gifts of God are inviolable, and nothing can corrupt what Nature has produced for our use, we abstain from these profane Oblations notwithstanding, lest we should be thought to collude with the Demons to whom they are presented, or seem
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alham'd of the Religion we profess. But who are they that imagine we are not permitted to meddle with Flowers? We gather the Lilly and the Rose, and all the rest the Spring produces that are in esteem for Beauty or for Sent, and apply them to their proper uses, our Women likewise have them in their Bosoms. If we wear no Crowns made of them, if we believe that neither our Hair nor the hinder part of our Heads can smell them, you must excuse us. Neither do we put them on the Dead, and wonder why you do so; if the Corps have no Sense of any thing, what good can these Flowers do them; if they have, why do you expose them to Flames? Moreover, if they are happy, they want them not, if the contrary, these Garlands cannot make them so. Our Funeral Solemnities for the Dead are answerable to the Moderation in which we live. We take not with us any withering Wreaths of fading Flowers, but Crowns of Righteousness of everlasting Odor, and immortal Beauty, which we receive from the liberal hand of God. We live likewise by the Grace his Bounty has bestowed

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upon us, free from Anxieties and Apprehensions, and judge of the Felicity that is prepared for us, by the Assurance he has given us of it by conversing among us; so that we shall be happy in a blessed Resurrection hereafter, as we are indeed in this present Life, by vertue of a well grounded Hope and joyful expectation of that which is to come. Let the *Athenian* Buffoon say he knows nothing, as long as he pleases, and at the same time be as vain as he can, because the lying Demon pronounced him wise. Let *Arcefilas*, *Carneades*, *Pyrrho*, and the rest of the *Academicks* eternally doubt. Let *Simonides* delay his Answer for ever, we scorn the Pride of these Philosophers, knowing them to be Tyrants, Corrupters, Adulterers, always eloquent against their own Vices. We talk not like great Pretenders, but our Lives are Exemplary. We study not to appear Wise, but to be so. In a Word, we look upon it as our glory to have found what they were ever in search for, but could never find. Why should we be ungrateful? why should we envy our own success? If we are so happy as to have the

the Divine Truth made manifest in our days, let us enjoy our good Fortune, cease to dispute, abolish Superstition, suppress Impiety, that true Religion alone may flourish and Triumph over all.

OCTAVIUS concluding here, we remain'd a considerable time as it were astonished, with our Eyes fixt upon each other without speaking a Word. As for my part, I was even transported that he had proved by Authority, Reason and Examples, what is ordinarily better conceived than expressed; and was extremely satisfied to see that he had beaten them with their own Weapons, and shewn that Truth is not only easie but favourable.

As I revolved these things in my mind, CÆCILIUS breaking silence, I embrace, said he, OCTAVIUS and thank him as far as the Freedom of our Friendship will allow, and am overjoyed for what has happened. I expect not the Determination of our Arbitrator, I am malicious enough to usurp the victory; as OCTAVIUS triumphs over me, I triumph over my Error. As to the main of the Controversie, I confess a Providence, and submit my self to God; I acknowledge the sincerity of your, or
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rather our Religion. There is nevertheless somewhat behind still, tho' not contrary to Truth, yet necessary to a perfect Instruction; but we'll adjourn that till to-morrow, for see the Sun begins to set: And I would be thoroughly inform'd in every particular as soon as possible, and in a more convenient place. As to my self, said I, I likewise partake of the Victory, and am very happy to have nothing to say upon a Controversie betwixt my Friends. Neither shall I attempt to make any futable return of Thanks to OCTAVIUS. All I can say will fall short of his Merit: The Testimony of Man, much less of a single Person is too little. That God who has already conferr'd so much grace upon him as to enable him to make such a Triumphant Defence of Truth, will give him a Recompence. After all we retired very joyful, CECILIUS that he believ'd, OCTAVIUS that he had Conquer'd, and my self for the Faith of the one, and the Victory of the other.

F I N I S.

